

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1640

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PEPR,CY,EG
SUBJ: DIVIDED GREEK REACTION TO CYPRIOT-EYGPtian DISPUTE

REF: A) ATHENS 1552 B) ATHENS 1594

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. REPORTS ABOUT PRESIDENT
CARTER'S CONDOLENCE MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT SADAT IN TODAY'S
(FEBRUARY 24) PRESS ARE THE FOCAL POINT OF CONTINUING
INTENSE GREEK INTEREST IN AND DISMAY AT DEVELOPMENTS
SURROUNDING THE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN
CYPRUS AND EGYPT. YESTERDAY GREEK MFA OFFICIALS CONVEYED
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TO US THEIR CONCERN OVER EARLY REPORTS, BASED PRIMARILY
ON AN ACCOUNT BY THE MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY, THAT
PRESIDENT CARTER HAD EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE
EGYPTIAN COMMANDO INTERVENTION AT LARNACA AIRPORT.
HOWEVER, UPON LEARNING THE ACTUAL CONTENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE, THEY ATTEMPTED TO COUNTER THE ERRONEOUS
IMPRESSIONS CIRCULATING HERE. A GOG SPOKESMAN, ASKED

ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST NEWS AGENCY STORY, STATED THAT ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT OF A WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE WAS CONVEYED BY TELEPHONE BY THE WHITE HOUSE ON THE PRESIDENT'S BEHALF TO THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY. HE THEN QUOTED THE FULL TEXT OF THE WHITE HOUSE COMMENT WHICH INDICATED PRESIDENT CARTER HAD EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES OF THOSE KILLED IN THE INCIDENT AT LARNACA AIRPORT AND SAID THAT HE SHARED PRESIDENT SADAT'S DEEP CONCERN ABOUT TERRORISM. THE SPOKESMAN NOTED THAT PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS HAS ALSO REPEATEDLY CONDEMNED TERRORISM. THE PRESS TODAY REPEATS THE ABOVE AND ALSO REFERS TO EMBASSY NICOSIA'S PRESS RELEASE ON THE SUBJECT.

2. THE MEDIA CONTINUE TO FEATURE DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE DISPUTE BETWEEN NICOSIA AND CAIRO. WHILE MUCH OF THE REPORTING HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO FACTUAL COVERAGE AND TO STATEMENTS MADE IN CAIRO, NICOSIA AND ATHENS (REFTEL B), REPORTS ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE TO SADAT DOMINATED THE NEWS TODAY. THE NEWSPAPERS REPORT VARIOUS VERSIONS OF WHAT THE PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE CONTAINED AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE. THE COMMUNIST AND OPPOSITION LEFTIST PRESS STRESSED THE INTERPRETATION THAT THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONSTITUTED OUTRIGHT BACKING FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THE EGYPTIAN INTERVENTION IN CYPRUS AND THAT A PLOT TO DESTABILIZE THE CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT'S POSITION, AND PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU IN PARTICULAR, IS UNDERWAY. MOSCOW-ORIENTED (KKE-EXTERIOR) RIZOSPASTIS ACCUSED WASHINGTON OF BEING BEHIND THESE DEVELOPMENTS, WHEREAS EURP-COMMUNIST (KKE-INTERIOR) AVGHI ATTACKED IMPERIALIST FORCES AS BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONSPIRACY. LIBERAL TO VIMA WROTE THAT EVENTS LED TO THE IMPRESSION THAT THE US WAS ACTIVELY SIDING WITH SADAT IN THE DISPUTE WITH THE INTENT OF STRENGTHENING THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT'S STANDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND OF UNDERMINING PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU IN CYPRUS. LEFTIST TA NEA SAID PRESIDENT CARTER OPENLY SUPPORTED SADAT THROUGH HIS MESSAGE AND HAD MADE THE CRISIS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT. SENSATIONALIST ELEFTHEROTYPIA EMPHASIZED THAT THE US WAS BACKING SADAT WHEREAS THE USSR WAS SUPPORTING KYPRIANOU. FINALLY, THE PASOK WEEKLY NEWSPAPER EXORMISI REHASHED THE CONSPIRACY THEORY, SAYING THAT THE US, THROUGH SADAT, WAS SEEKING TO UNDERMINE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND IN DOING SO TO ISOLATE CYPRUS FROM ARAB SUPPORT AND OVERTHROW KYPRIANOU.

3. IN CONTRAST, GOVERNMENT-LEADING KATHIMERINI UNDERLINED THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN ATTEMPT BY THE EGYPTIANS TO DISTORT THE MEANING OF THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE WHICH, IN FACT, HAD BEEN AN EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY OVER THE DEATHS OF THE EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS AND A CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM. THIS LINE IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME WHICH APPEARS IN PRO-GOVERNMENT VRADYNI. GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTING AKROPOLIS EMPHASIZED THAT THE MESSAGE WAS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF SYMPATHY AND NOT OF SUPPORT FOR THE EGYPTIAN COMMANDO ACTIVITY, WHILE APOGEVMATINI SAID THE MESSAGE'S CONTENTS ARE UNKNOWN AND THE SITUATION IS CONFUSED. EXTREME RIGHT ELEFTHEROS COSMOS COMMENTED THAT WHILE THERE HAD

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BEEN SOME INITIAL MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE TO SADAT, SUBSEQUENT EXPLANATIONS CLARIFIED THE TRUE MEANING OF THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ULTRA CONSERVATIVE ESTIA ANGRILY ATTACKED THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE AS ANOTHER HOSTILE GESTURE TOWARDS HELLENISM. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN CLASSIFIED. COMMENT: AS CAN BE IMAGINED, POPULAR SENTIMENT AGAINST SADAT IS VERY STRONG HERE, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE MANY GREEKS FEEL PRESIDENT SADAT'S PERSONAL ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU DURING THE FUNERAL CEREMONY IN CAIRO WERE EXTREME AND UNSTATESMAN-LIKE. HOWEVER, THE GOG, WHICH FULLY RECOGNIZES THE VALUE TO BOTH GREECE AND CYPRUS OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH EGYPT, IS SEEKING TO DAMPEN EMOTIONS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HOPING TO KEEP ITSELF AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN FUTURE EFFORTS TO RESTORE RELATIONS BETWEEN NICOSIA AND CAIRO TO THEIR PREVIOUS HAPPIER STATE. MILLS

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